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REVIEW OF CROSS-SECTORAL CLUSTERS: EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND THE TRANSFER OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND TECHNOLOGY, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO AGENDA 21, CHAPTERS 34, 36 AND 37

Draft decision submitted by the Chairman

Promoting education, public awareness and training
(Chapter 36 of Agenda 21)

1. The Commission on Sustainable Development:

(a) Welcoming the many initiatives undertaken to promote education, public awareness and training for sustainable development, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General thereon and its addendum (E/CN.17/1996/14 and Add.1), noted the progress made in cooperative initiatives such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP);

(b) Reaffirmed that education, public awareness and training are critical for promoting sustainable development and increasing the capacity to address environment and development issues, and that therefore the implementation of chapter 36 of Agenda 21 will influence progress in the implementation of all the other chapters of Agenda 21;

(c) Noted that recommendations concerning education appear in the action plans of all of the major United Nations conferences and conventions adopted after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(d) Also noted the series of international meetings and studies that had taken place since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to discuss the status and future directions of environment and development

education, and expressed its appreciation to the Czech Republic for having organized the inter-sessional workshop on "Education and public awareness for sustainable development" (Prague, 28 November-1 December 1995), which had put forward to the Commission recommendations for use in preparing a work programme. The Commission also recognized the work of UNESCO's International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century;

(e) Recognized that education for sustainable development needs to be understood as part of a broad new vision of education as a lifelong process. This will require restructuring and reform of formal education, as well as the utilization of all non-formal channels, including distance education*;

(f) Drew attention to the need to further refine the concept of education for sustainable development and to identify the key messages;

(g) Reiterated the importance of basic education for all and of lifelong learning about environment and development. Traditional knowledge should be valued and not submerged in this process;

(h) Recognized the potential of technical and vocational education and training in the promotion of sustainable development in key economic sectors;

(i) Stressed the need to give greater emphasis to the role of education for sustainable development, including environmental economics, as well as public awareness in changing unsustainable production and consumption patterns and lifestyles;

(j) Underlined the important role that the media and the advertising industry can play in raising public awareness about sustainable development, including changes in unsustainable patterns of production and consumption;

(k) Recognized the need to give increasing emphasis to raising awareness and taking action in implementing Agenda 21 at the community and municipality levels, as well as to targeting households as a key point of entry;

(l) Stressed the need to broaden cooperation at the international level, building on past experience, in particular that of the UNESCO/UNEP International Environmental Education Programme, and involving all relevant bodies of the United Nations system, Governments and major groups, in particular non-governmental organizations, business and industry, youth and the educational community. A new cooperative arrangement should be developed that is bold and imaginative and concentrates on a limited number of key undertakings during the next four or five years.

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* Formal education refers to education in schools, and non-formal education to all other types of education.

2. The Commission, taking into account relevant linkages with the programme of work on changing production and consumption patterns adopted at its third session, therefore, agreed to initiate a programme of work in the context of which it:

(a) Urges UNESCO as task manager for chapter 36 to actively pursue, in partnership with UNEP, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and other key institutions, international initiatives that lead towards a broad alliance for education for sustainable development taking into account the experience of the UNESCO/UNEP International Environmental Education Programme and other relevant programmes, and to promote networks on education and training for sustainable development at all levels, particularly at the grass-roots level;

(b) Urges the United Nations system, Governments and major groups to implement in an integrated manner the recommendations concerning education, public awareness and training contained in the action plans of all the major United Nations conferences and conventions adopted after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(c) Invites UNESCO, working in close cooperation with other governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the educational and scientific communities, to advise on how education and training for sustainable development can be integrated into national educational policies;

(d) Calls upon UNESCO to refine the concept and key messages of education for sustainable development, taking into account the experience of environmental education and integrating considerations pertaining to population, health, economics, social and human development, and peace and security;

(e) Urges Governments to advance education and training for sustainable development, with assistance as appropriate from the United Nations system and other relevant international bodies. The Commission encourages the involvement of the educational community, the sharing of experience (including among the youth themselves) and the highlighting of best practices, in particular within local communities in the preparation and implementation of action plans to this effect;

(f) Calls upon developed countries, international organizations and the private sector to assist in promoting education, public awareness and training in developing countries, through the provision of financial and technical support;

(g) Encourages the development of new partnership arrangements among educators, scientists, Governments, non-governmental organizations, business and industry, youth, the media and other major groups, to communicate the key messages of sustainable development through both formal and non-formal channels. The new communications technologies should be exploited for this purpose. Education and training for sustainable development should be based on a broad participatory approach, taking into account local needs and values;

(h) Encourages Governments and all relevant stakeholders to work in partnership with youth to strengthen tools for youth empowerment and to provide skills and training to prepare youth for decision-making roles and sustainable livelihoods;

(i) Urges the Bretton Woods institutions to analyse their current investments in education, with respect to the needs of promoting education for sustainable development;

(j) Requests the Secretary-General to take the preliminary results of this work programme into account in the context of the 1997 review of education, public awareness and training.